

HANDHELDS

FAQ

Q The fastest mobile data standard that the iPhone supports is EDGE. What is EDGE, how fast is it and where is it available?

A EDGE, also known as EGPRS, is an upgrade to the GPRS mobile data standard. It's sometimes considered a 2.75G standard, as it's not as fast as 3G data. EDGE is popular in North America, but in the UK only Orange and O₂ have EDGE networks. Despite having an extensive 3G network, O₂ has only started building an EDGE network since Apple chose it as the UK network for the iPhone.

EDGE's maximum speed is around 200Kbit/s, which is far slower than the 3G standard's 384Kbit/s and HSDPA's 1.8Mbit/s. Its main problem is that UK coverage is very limited, especially on the O₂ network. Only about 30 per cent of the UK's population is covered, and the rest has to make do with GPRS, which has a bandwidth of around 48Kbit/s. O₂ is gradually improving its EDGE coverage, but hopefully the second-generation iPhone will support 3G.

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APPLE iPhone

★★★★★

£269 on £35-a-month contract
From <http://store.apple.com/Apple/WebObjects/ukstore>

After the huge amount of hype, the iPhone needs little introduction. Fortunately, it's as good as Apple makes out. As well as being an 8GB iPod touch, it's a powerful and incredibly easy-to-use smartphone.

The iPhone's user interface is a triumph. It has only four physical buttons: two control the volume, one locks the phone and one goes back to the main menu. The rest of its functions are controlled using the touchscreen. This is more advanced than the touchscreens of most smartphones. It recognises dragging motions as well as simple prods, and you can use more than one finger at a time. This means you can move around webpages and documents by dragging your finger around the screen, and give lists of names a flick to scroll through them. It works beautifully, and feels far smoother and more natural than using a normal touchscreen and stylus.

Typing is done on an onscreen keyboard. The keys are fairly small, and you have to concentrate to avoid hitting the wrong key, but it's better than the onscreen Windows Mobile keyboard. The iPhone has a built-in email client, which makes it easy to set up a POP or IMAP email account, and it arranges text messages in chat threads to help you keep track of text conversations. It also has Visual Voicemail, which displays your voicemail messages in a list so that you can choose which to listen to rather than having to listen to each in turn. The iPhone certainly makes sending and keeping track of your messages easier than any phone we've seen. You can even view, but not edit, Word and Excel documents.

It's certainly good at messaging, but the iPhone's biggest draw is its web browser. It uses a version of



Apple's Safari, and is easily the best mobile browser available. It renders webpages in full screen with no reformatting. Images look superb, and you can navigate by dragging your finger around the page, pinching your fingers together to zoom in and moving them apart to zoom out. The only problem is that the fastest mobile data standard it supports is EDGE, which is slower than 3G and rare outside London. Most of the time you will have to use GPRS, which is about as fast as a dial-up modem. However, the phone's O₂ contract includes access to The Cloud's wireless network, so you can connect over 802.11g if you're near a hotspot.

There are two significant problems. First, the headphone socket is so deeply recessed that you can't plug in a standard pair of headphones without an ugly adaptor. As the iPhone is meant to be an iPod touch as well, this is very annoying. Second, it's expensive. You can only buy the iPhone on an expensive £35-a-month contract, so it will cost you a total of £900 over the course of a minimum 18-month contract. If you can take the cost and lack of 3G, though, the iPhone is superb and the best smartphone you can buy.

Chris Finnamore

SUMMARY

- ✓ Beautiful interface
- ✓ Powerful web browser
- ✗ No 3G; expensive

SMARTPHONE Quad-band GSM, GPRS, EDGE, 3½in 320x480 resolution LCD, 2-megapixel camera, 8GB storage, USB, Bluetooth, 802.11b/g connectivity, 8 hours' talktime, 10 days' standby, 135g
PART CODE MB213B/A
DETAILS www.apple.com/uk

Also consider...

TOMTOM Go 720

★★★★★

£280 inc VAT
From www.argos.co.uk

BEST BUY TomTom's Go 720 is an excellent navigator with full maps of Western Europe, a large screen and clear voice prompts. Its most impressive aspect is the Map Share feature, which lets you correct map errors on the device and even upload them to TomTom's servers for other 720 owners to download. It also has Bluetooth, an FM transmitter and voice recognition, all of which make it the best satnav available.



STANDALONE SATNAV 4.3in 480x272 resolution LCD, TomTom Navigator software, TeleAtlas Western European maps, 2GB internal storage, SD card slot, Bluetooth, FM transmitter, 118x24x83mm, 220g PART CODE 1M00.760 DETAILS www.tomtom.com
FULL REVIEW Nov 2007

NOKIA E65

★★★★★

£200 SIM-free, from free on £30-per-month contract
From www.expansys.com (SIM-free), www.three.co.uk, www.o2.co.uk (contract)

BEST BUY Nokia's E65 is a compact and stylish smartphone with a slide-out keypad that has large, easy-to-press buttons. It has an excellent screen and a superb web browser that lets you browse pages in their original format, just as you would on a PC. The phone's integrated wireless networking is simple to set up, and the handset supports fast 3G data connections.

The E65 is the best compact internet smartphone around and is great value on a contract.



SMARTPHONE Tri-band GSM, 3G, GPRS, 240x320-resolution LCD, 2-megapixel camera, 52MB internal memory, microSD card slot, USB, Bluetooth, IR, 802.11b/g connectivity PART CODE E65
DETAILS www.nokia.co.uk FULL REVIEW Jul 2007

BECKER Traffic Assist 7927

★★★★

£215 inc VAT

From www.purelygadgets.co.uk

A satnav system can save you time when travelling by plotting the best course to your destination and stopping you getting lost. Finding the right road is no good if it's snarled up with traffic, though, so it's useful to have a satnav with integrated traffic alerts. Most satnavs download traffic data over a mobile phone's data connection using Bluetooth, which can be fiddly to set up and racks up data costs. Becker's Traffic Assist 7927 has a built-in TMC receiver that picks up traffic information for free from RDS EON radio broadcasts.

The red mood lights on either side of the display may not be to everyone's taste, but the 7927's black and silver finish makes it look more stylish than most. The screen has the same 320x240 resolution as most satnavs, and text is clear, but the interface runs far more slowly than TomTom's and feels clunky at first. You control the satnav with onscreen buttons, but some are often greyed out for no apparent reason and make an annoying error sound when you press them.

Once you get used to the interface's quirks, entering an address is fairly easy. You can enter a country, city and street, and the software narrows down the possible destinations and displays a list to choose from. You can also search by postcode, but unlike most current satnavs the 7927 supports only the first five digits of a postcode instead of seven, so you still have a long list of streets from which to choose. The 7927 comes with full maps of Western Europe, which is impressive for the price.



Routes are calculated quickly, and it took just 22 seconds to plan a journey from central London to Edinburgh. The 7927 is also a competent navigator. The map display and voice prompts are clear, and the software stacks prompts so that you know what the next two turns are. Unfortunately, the second turn is sometimes a long way down the road, which can be confusing if you think you need to turn before you do.

The TMC works well. You can view a list of traffic problems along your route with descriptions of each incident, and when you're getting close to a traffic incident the satnav will

pop up a window describing the incident and asking if you want to reroute to avoid it.

Becker's Traffic Assist 7927 is good value for a satnav with full European maps and is a fine navigator. It's fairly clunky to use, though, and faces some stiff competition. TomTom's One Traffic costs only £200, is easier to use and has Western European maps and TMC traffic information. It's the better choice.

Chris Finnamore

SUMMARY

- ✓ Integrated traffic information
- ✓ Reasonable value
- ✗ Clunky interface

STANDALONE SATNAV 3½in 320x240 resolution LCD, Becker Traffic Assist 1.0.1 navigation software (based on Navigon), Navteq Western European maps, SD card slot, TMC traffic information, 104x19x82mm, 168g
PART CODE BE 7927
DETAILS www.mybecker.com

CHOOSING A... Satnav

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

MAP COVERAGE: UK and Ireland

SCREEN SIZE: 3½in

POSTCODE SUPPORT: Five characters

TRAFFIC DATA: None

Recommended minimum in grey

1 A satnav with the minimum specifications listed above will cost you around £130.

It's a standalone device, so you get everything you need in one compact handheld unit. Its screen is not particularly big or clear to see, and it will be quite slow at calculating routes. It has UK and Ireland maps only, so you can't use it in other parts of the world.

If you've got an existing PDA or smartphone, you can buy the software, maps and, if needed, GPS receiver in a kit. This will convert your handheld into a satnav with similar specifications to those listed above. The cost will be similar, too.

2 To travel further afield than the UK or Ireland, you'll need new maps. These are usually available from the manufacturer at an extra cost. When you buy the maps, make sure you've got a memory card big enough to store them, or enough memory on your PDA or smartphone.

Alternatively, you can save a bit of money by buying a satnav with a wider choice of maps in the first place.

3 Want quicker route calculation and a better display? Buy a more expensive standalone satnav with a quicker processor; a 4in screen or higher with a resolution of 480x272 will give you plenty of space for detailed maps. If you're using a PDA or smartphone and it seems slow, consider upgrading to a newer model with a quicker processor and a screen with a higher resolution.

4 If you travel a lot, real-time traffic information is essential. The most common way to get updates is by connecting to your mobile phone and downloading the latest information. This data is charged at normal network rates, though.

Some high-end standalone satnavs have a TMC chip, which receives traffic information over the FM radio network for free.

Several high-end standalone units have integrated microphones and can be used as a hands-free phone over a Bluetooth connection. To take advantage, you'll need a compatible mobile phone with Bluetooth.

ARCHOS 405

★★★★★

£110 inc VAT

From www.play.com

Archos's latest budget portable media player replaces the 404.

Unlike the 404, it has 2GB of flash storage instead of a 30GB hard disk, but it can take up to 16GB of extra storage in its SDHC card slot. The player is easy to use, and video looks good on the bright and clear screen. It's good value, and will become better value as SDHC cards drop in price.



PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER 3½in 320x240 resolution LCD, 2GB storage, SDHC card slot, plays MPEG4 (DivX, XviD), WMV, MPEG1 and MPEG2 with optional plug-in (all up to DVD resolution), plays MP3, WMA, protected WMA, Wav, AAC with optional plug-in, five hours' video playback, 16 hours' audio playback, USB2, 100x13x78mm, 146g PART CODE 105914EU V2 DETAILS www.archos.com FULL REVIEW Jan 2008

PALM Treo 500v

★★★★★

Free on £20-per-month contract

From www.vodafone.co.uk

BEST BUY Palm's Treo 500v is a great-looking Windows Mobile phone with a QWERTY keyboard. Palm has heavily customised the operating system, so it's far simpler to use than most Windows Mobile phones. The keyboard's easy to use, and the Google Maps and Messenger applications are particularly useful. It's also free on a cheap mobile contract, so is great value.

SMARTPHONE Tri-band, 3G, GPRS, 2½in 320x240 resolution LCD, 2-megapixel camera, 150MB storage, microSD card slot, USB, Bluetooth connectivity, 4½ hours' talk time, 10 days' standby, 120g PART CODE 1060IE-VFN DETAILS www.palm.com REVIEW Dec 2007

